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**US Army Corps
of Engineers
New England District**

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Yankee Engineer

September 2007

Chief of Engineers visits Massachusetts

Muddy River, Boston Harbor site visits top Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp's agenda

Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, Chief of Engineers, toured New England District projects during his visit to Massachusetts, Aug. 15-16.

During his visit, the Chief met with Keith Beecher, Park Ranger at Westville Dam and the 2007 Legends Award recipient. While visiting Westville Lake Dam, the General received a tour of the facility and an overview of the New England District Flood Mitigation and Recreation Project.

Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp also traveled to Muddy River and met with the Muddy River project sponsors from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the city of Boston and the town of Brookline and the Corps Project Manager to get a project overview, listen to the sponsor's issues or concerns and tour the project area.

Phase 1 of the flood damage reduction project includes installation of two culverts and day lighting of the river from the Riverway to Avenue Louis Pasteur. Design work on phase 1 began in September 2005 and is expected to be completed by January 2008.

After his tour of the Muddy River, the Chief of Engineers concluded his

trip to the New England District with a briefing on the District's Boston Harbor Navigation Project and a tour of Boston Harbor, courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Project Manager Mike Keegan; Capt. Gail Kulisch, U.S. Coast Guard Commander, Sector Boston; Massachusetts Port Authority Director Mike Leone and Deputy Port Director Deb Hadden accompanied Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp on the two hour boat tour which highlighted the various working

terminals of the port.

Work on the Boston Harbor Navigation project includes removing shoaled material in the various federal channels and removing ledge in three sections of the channels.

To reduce mobilization costs, the ledge removal effort is being conducted in conjunction with ledge removal efforts for the Providence River Navigation project. Drilling work for the ledge removal in Boston Harbor began in late August.



Photo by C.J. Allen

Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, Chief of Engineers, gets a briefing on the Muddy River project. Muddy River is one of several site visits the Chief took during his visit to Massachusetts.

Yankee Voices

Raimo Liias and Sue MacDonald
WE Committee Free Watermelon Event



Congratulations

... to **Ellen Iorio** who was named the WE Committee's Employee of the Month for September. Iorio was recognized for her effort during the spring and summer as the interim project manager for the EPA's Superfund Program at three Vermont mine sites.

Iorio was able to carry her normal workload, took on the added role of project manager for these three sites and completed investigation, design and sampling efforts while garnering praise from one of New England District's most important customers, EPA Region I.

Sympathy

to **Claire Sullivan**, Construction/Operations, on the passing of her sister, **Eleanor Gilbert** on Sept. 8 after a long illness. Mrs. Gilbert had more than 26 years of Federal service as a civilian employee of the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force.

Letters of thanks

Meaningful Experience

...I would like to personally thank you for your support of my Academic Individual Advanced Development opportunity this summer. Your generosity made it possible for me to serve with the New England District and learn about your mission of supporting the defense, infrastructure, environment and economy of the greater New England area.

Not only did I learn a lot during this experience, I was also afforded many opportunities to see interesting and relevant applications of what I'm currently studying here at West Point. I truly appreciate the efforts of you and your staff, especially Mr. Jim Morocco, to ensure that I was kept busy with plenty of site visits. I am confident that the lessons I learned from this experience will help me throughout my career.

Thank you again for allowing me to come and be a part of your team for a few weeks – it was a very meaningful experience. Your employees at Devens and the staff at the District Office were extremely professional and insightful, and it was a pleasure to work with them. Please give them my regards.

Respectfully,

Trevor Thomas, CD SGT
USCC, West Point, NY

Junior Ranger Program

...Thank you for the great Jr. Ranger Program at the Cape Cod Canal. Please share our thanks with all of your fellow rangers!!

Danny thoroughly enjoyed the program - when he told Barbara that his favorite part was "All of it" he was very sincere!! He is already talking about next year.

Coming home with his goody bag - he took the Frisbee "ring", tied a jump rope to it and made us play "life preserver" over and over!!

We hope to see you again before the end of the season!

Thanks again!

Sarah & Danny Zappala

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Commander's Corner:

The Chief's plan to go from 'Good to 'Great'

by Col. Curtis L. Thalken
District Commander



Last month I had the opportunity to attend the summer USACE Senior Leader's Conference. The theme of the conference revolved around the question how can US-ACE make the leap from a "good" to a "great" organization?

Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp posed this question after reading the book *Good to Great* by author Jim Collins. I found Collins' ideas very relevant to discussions we have had within the district over the past two years. Collins identified three patterns of behavior in companies that were able to make the leap from good to great and I'd like to briefly describe each.

First, great companies are composed of disciplined people. The corporate leaders of great companies demonstrated an unwavering resolve to do whatever they felt was necessary to make their company great. Likewise, they had little or no tolerance for mediocrity. One point I found very interesting was successful leaders first choose to surround themselves with a strong supporting cast rather than first choosing a vision for the company's vision. To explain his logic, Collins introduces a bus trip analogy that continues through the rest of the book. Collins states: "If you begin with 'who' rather than 'what' you can more easily adapt to a changing world." Stated another way, get the right people on the bus and then figure out where you want it to go. With the right leaders

aboard and everyone focused on arriving at the same destination, great leaders will anticipate problems and take actions to resolve them before they force the bus off course.

Second, great companies demonstrated disciplined thought processes. Disciplined thought begins by confronting the brutal facts (another Collins' catch phrase). It is almost impossible to make sound decision absent of an accurate assessment of the situation requiring a decision; therefore people must believe they can speak the truth without fear of repercussion. This also requires leaders to conduct assessments of why things failed to succeed, with an emphasis on preventing reoccurrences not on establishing blame. Furthermore, results of these assessments (or AARs to use a familiar Army term) must be shared throughout the organization so others can learn how to avoid a similar pitfall. At this point Collins introduces the parable of the Fox and the Hedgehog. Foxes dart about pursuing many ends at once. Their efforts are often divergent and lack a single unifying idea or principle. The hedgehog on the other hand, reduces all problems to simple ideas and anything that does not contribute to the hedgehog's ideas is ignored as irrelevant. The hedgehog's single-minded focus on task accomplishment ensures the hedgehog will always beat the fox.

Third, great companies take disciplined action. Disciplined should not be confused with bureaucratic. In a disciplined organization actions taken must be consistent with the accomplishment of the Hedgehog's ideas. The critical element here is not a tyrannical framework from above, but self-disciplined and self-motivated people who constantly

Continued on page 7



Hanscom Fitness Center Grand Opening

NAD Commander Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite joins Deputy Commanding General, Electronic Systems Command, Maj. Gen. Art Rooney, Fitness Center Director Jerry Turnbow, Deputy Wing Commander, Col. Jeffrey Mayo, and other officials in cutting the ribbon at the Hanscom Air Force Base Fitness Center grand opening, Sept. 5.

Photo by Mark McInerney

Teachers get an education at New England District

Laura Sullivan, a math teacher at Randolph High School in Massachusetts, will be going back to her students this fall with a new curriculum based on what she learned from New England District's engineers and scientists.

Instead of teaching summer school, Sullivan opted to become a student herself and participate in the 2007 Massachusetts Schools to Careers Program. Sullivan was one of approximately 20 teachers to participate in the program and one of two teachers given a two-week externship with the Corps of Engineers. The New England District had participated in this program once before in 2005, giving teachers ideas of how to translate math and science into real-world situations for their students. "The question that every teacher dreads from their students is, 'when are we ever going to use this?'" said Sullivan. "My short time here has given me multiple examples of when they would use basic formulas, spreadsheets, estimations of areas and mapping skills. Math is everywhere at the Corps of Engineers."

Sullivan spent two weeks with Raimo Liias and employees from Engineering/Planning. "It took some time organizing the schedules for the many supportive folks who shared their time with Laura," said Liias. "Once this was done though I think Laura got to see a really wide view of what we do here at the Corps."

According to Sullivan, the passion and dedication of the District employees about their work was evident in her interviews with them. "I've spent about an hour or more with people just because the conversation got going and the interest was there," said Sullivan. "Every single person has been so help-



Raimo Liias and teacher Laura Sullivan visit the Cape Cod Canal as part of Sullivan's externship.

Photo provided by Laura Sullivan

ful and friendly."

In addition to the talks, New England District employees gave Sullivan many resources to help her form her curriculum. "People were giving me PowerPoint presentations and the links to Corps websites," she said. "I'm amazed how much information is publicly available."

Sullivan also went on site visits to include the New Bedford Hurricane Barrier, the Cape Cod Canal and some Superfund sites. "I think that the variety of disciplines offered her many choices," said Liias. "I think that the combination of field trips to visit sites allowed her to see how the work done in the office eventually led to something real on the ground. I think she had several choices for possible lessons."

Armed with practical applications for math and science in the business world, Sullivan was ready to write her curriculum based on what she learned. "I'm going to write a series of lesson plans," she said. "I'll probably do my curriculum unit for my geometry class and present them with a breakwater design."

Craig Beaulieu, an environmental science teacher at Randolph High, also spent his time learning from the New England District team. Beaulieu teamed with the Regulatory staff at the District and got a lot of ideas about the aquatic environment and how to integrate real world projects into his cur-

riculum. "We explained our regulatory program, a little bit about wetland science and how we interact with our stakeholders and the public," said Christine Godfrey, Chief, Regulatory Division. "We brought him into the field to observe wetland mitigation sites, and several permit compliance inspections."

The School to Careers Program, which is in its sixth year of operation, is a two to three week externship where teachers have the opportunity to relate and update their curriculum to state-of-the-art business expectations. Teachers spend their weeks working full-time learning about the business while participating in a specific business project. According to Katherine Touafek, Director of The School to Careers Partnership, Sullivan and Beaulieu aren't the only ones who benefit from their time spent at the District. "The teachers must write a curriculum unit to use this school year in the class based on their experience," she said. "Since each teacher has approximately 75 new students each year, this translates into many, many students benefiting from these experiences!"

Teachers are paid a stipend and earn professional development credits for their participation in the program, but according to Sullivan, she came away with much more. "Some of what is being done here is at a very high level and I have to push myself for a greater understanding," she said. "There were days that I felt I was back in college. I also hope to encourage my students to learn about the co-op programs and the internships at the Corps of Engineers. Some of the kids would be a great fit here. It would give them a chance to explore this aspect of engineering."

Operation Adopt a Platoon

Park Ranger becomes 'father' to platoon of medics in Iraq

Michael Currie, Park Ranger at North Springfield Lake in Vermont has family deployed in Iraq. In addition to his son, Spec. Ian Currie who is serving with the 1st Battalion Combat Team, 2/7 Infantry, 2nd Brigade Combat Team 3rd Infantry Division, Currie has also "adopted" 35 combat medics who are currently deployed through Operation "Adopt a Platoon."

The Adopt a Platoon program was established in 1998 and is a non-profit organization managed nationwide by volunteer mothers to ensure that deployed United States Service members in all branches of the military are not forgotten.

Currie's personal involvement with the program began shortly after his son enlisted in the U.S. Army. "Our family supports our son," said Currie. "But he met young men who didn't have the family support he did, and he saw and felt the affects on morale."

While traveling to military graduations and deployment send-offs, Currie and his family met the Soldiers and learned their stories. Around the time when Currie's son deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004, he read an article about the Adopt a Platoon Program. He remembered the young Soldiers serving with his son and knew he had to do something. "It struck a nerve with me and I followed through after reading the article," he said.

Currie called the reporter who wrote the article and she immediately put him in touch with Ida Haig, the founder of the Adopt a Platoon program. His decision to adopt a platoon had nothing to do with politics and everything to do with supporting those who willingly put themselves in harm's way for their country who need to have the occasional word from home. "I found there was room in my heart and time in my life for these men who were looking for a family connection," he



Photos provided by Mike Currie
Mike Currie and Brian Szad raise funds to support the troops. Ian Currie, currently deployed to Iraq, was Currie's inspiration to adopt a platoon.

said.

According to Currie, once a sponsor individual or organization is approved to adopt through an application process, the sponsor commits to the platoon for the duration of its deployment, usually one year. Currie will sponsor his platoon through August 2008. "The sponsor agrees to send care/support packages once a month to the platoon for the period, with all the fundraising, purchasing, corresponding and mailing being the sponsor's responsibility," he said.

To test the adoption waters, Currie started small at first and adopted a deployed platoon of four soldiers, and the rest is history. "That was four platoons ago," said Currie. "The subsequent platoons have ranged in size from 33 Soldiers in the 101st Airborne to our last platoon of 20 Soldiers, through and including the 35 medics we currently have, our fourth platoon."

It costs a lot of money to care for a large family – Currie estimates his will cost him around \$4,000 this year. As President of the Precision Valley Fish and Game Association, Currie has teamed with Brian Szad owner of the Main Street Market, along with many local individual benefactors in the

Springfield and Ludlow, Vermont area to raise about \$7,000 since 2004. "There is always a need for more funds, and to involve more folks in this effort," said Currie.

The decision to participate in the Adopt a Platoon Program has been an emotionally fulfilling one for Currie. "I get goose bumps every day, thinking about touching the hearts of these particular Soldiers in my platoon," he said. "These combat medics risk their lives daily to help our wounded, our most vulnerable Soldiers, every day."

"What if you or I could write a letter that touched one of these medics in such a way that he carried that letter with him in his pocket on his mission?" said Currie. "Then on a given day, some young wounded Soldier needed a letter from home, any home, and that medic passed along that letter from you to the wounded Soldier. Could there be a purer way of supporting these troops?" To learn more about the Adopt a Platoon Program, go to www.adoptaplatoon.org. Currie welcomes questions about his experiences in the program and can be reached at the North Springfield Office. (Mike Currie contributed significantly to this article.)

International Joint Commission designates St. Croix River its first Watershed Board

by Timothy Dugan
Public Affairs

The International Joint Commission visited the St. Croix Watershed Aug. 28, and held a Public Meeting in Calais, Maine, to mark the designation of the International St. Croix River Watershed Board. This was the first such designation of a Watershed Board by the International Joint Commission (IJC).

The St. Croix River Watershed Board was selected as the location for the first IJC Watershed Board to recognize the collaborative working relationships between the agencies and stakeholders in the watershed and their interest and commitment to working towards a shared vision for the management of the water resource.

"The Watershed Designation by the IJC reflects the continued development over the past decade of the International St. Croix River Board's cooperative approach to addressing issues in the basin," said Bill Appleby, Canadian Co-chair of the International St. Croix River Watershed Board and Director, National Service Operations Division, Environment Canada.

The International Joint Commission is an independent binational organization established by the Boundary Waters Treaty in 1909 with the purpose to help prevent and resolve disputes relating to the use and quality of boundary waters and to advise Canada and the United States on related questions.

Canada and the United States created the Commission because they recognized that each country is affected by the other's actions in lake and river systems along the border. The two countries cooperate to manage these waters wisely and to protect them for the benefit of today's citizens and fu-

ture generations.

Despite various agreements concerning the protection, use and allocation of these shared resources, increasing demands for their use will continue to generate periodic, and perhaps an increasing number of, cross-border concerns. The IJC believes that transboundary water resource problems are best resolved by those who live and work in the watershed. The



Canoeists paddle along the St. Croix River.

Photo by Barbara Blumeris

watershed approach recognizes the connectivity of the system and provides an ecosystem framework for defining water resource objectives. Further, the approach recognizes that successes in resolving local problems will increase as local stakeholders in both countries exchange information and gain experience working together on watershed issues.

The IJC and its new Watershed Board have undertaken special projects with local stakeholders and federal and provincial/state agencies that strengthen current and foster new partnerships in the watershed. These special projects are intended to promote a better cross-boundary understanding of the watershed characteristics.

"The Board's efforts in the past few years have expanded to include promotion of an improved transboundary exchange of watershed information," said Col. Curtis Thalken,

U.S. Co-chair of the International St. Croix River Watershed Board and commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District.

"The Board, with funding provided by IJC, has sought to assist local stakeholders through the development of watershed based tools such as mapping and modeling products, reports and workshops."

The Board's objective is to provide information to assist stakeholders in the U.S. and Canada in their watershed planning and management efforts and promote local collaborative resolution of any transboundary water resource issues that may arise.

The Board's mandate is to proactively assist the Commission in preventing and in resolving disputes regarding the boundary waters of the St. Croix River, to monitor the ecological health of the St. Croix River boundary waters aquatic ecosystem, and to ensure compliance with the Commission's Orders of Approval for structures in the St. Croix River.

The Board seeks to involve local stakeholders in resolving local problems locally, per the integrated approach laid out by the governments of Canada and the United States in their 1998 Watershed Board Reference.

"The health of the watershed is influenced by the actions of all the people living and working here. It is our shared responsibility, our shared asset," said Jessie Davies, board member and with Environment and Sustainable Development Research Centre, University of New Brunswick.

For more information about the International Joint Commission and the St. Croix River Watershed Board go to the website: http://www.ijc.org/conseil_board/st_croix_river/en/stcroix_home_accueil.htm.



Photos by Master Sgt. Anne Ward

The New England District successfully completed the Base Operations Facility at Westover ARB. Above: Col. Curtis Thalken (right) joined 439th Wing Commander, Brig. Gen. Wade Farris and Congr. Richard Neal in cutting the ribbon on the new facility.

District, partners celebrate project success with ribbon cutting ceremony at Westover ARB

Construction of the Base Operations facility at Westover Air Reserve Base (ARB) in Chicopee, Mass., is complete.

Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander, joined Congressional and Westover ARB officials and contractors in celebrating the grand opening of the facility with a ribbon cutting ceremony, Sept. 4.

The \$4 million facility will house the 439th Operation Group's Airfield Operations and Command Post functions.

"Through the 'one-door-to-the-Corps' concept, the Louisville District issued the design-build contract for the Base Operations project, and then released it to the New England District to execute construction management," said Col. Thalken.

The new facility is a single-story building consisting of concrete slab-on-grade construction and a steel frame with

steel stud/exterior gypsum walls. The building interior is steel stud partitions with gypsum boards.

"The project included all related site work required to support the new building, including utility connections, paving and security measures," said Col. Thalken. The design-build contract was a set-aside under the small business Hubzone program. The contract was awarded on July 28, 2005 to QBS, Inc., of Alliance, Ohio. QBS retained Burgess & Niple, Inc., of Painesville, Ohio for design services.

"Our team partners, which includes our local Congressional delegation, the 439th Airlift Wing and Westover Air Reserve Base staff, contractor QBS, Inc., and designer Burgess & Niple, Inc., and the Corps of Engineers, have shared a unique working relationship in completing this important project," said Col. Thalken.

...Going from 'Good to Great'

Continued from page 3

search to determine if their actions are accomplishing the hedgehog's objectives. In fact Collins states: "bureaucratic cultures arise to compensate for incompetence and lack of discipline, which arise from having the wrong people on the bus in the first place." Collins also stresses disciplined action occurs not only when others are watching (especially superiors), but more importantly when no one is watching.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly recommend Collin's book and Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp's on-line *Good to Great*

presentation. Hopefully, my condensed version has piqued your curiosity, and you will want to learn more.

As always thanks for all of your hard work and ask yourself: how are my actions helping us to serve our customers? If they aren't helping to safely provide a quality project on time, and under budget, what can I do to allow me to deliver or to use the words of Larry the Cable Guy, how can we just "git er done?"

Essayons!

U.S. Army Dive Company Inspects Tully Dam

Story and photos by Jeffrey Mangum
Park Manager, Tully Dam

Tully Dam in Royalston, Mass., was the sixth dam constructed in New England by the Corps of Engineers. Completed in 1949, it is now almost 60 years old. Originally a dry bed reservoir, a permanent recreation pool was established in 1966. Since then, the dark tea-colored water, a natural staining from tannins in the watershed, has hidden the intake structure below the waterline.

Due to problems in the past several years with the emergency gate guide rails above the waterline, there was concern with the condition below. The last periodic inspection conducted in October 2006 recommended a dive inspection be performed to determine needed repairs.

I consulted with Chris Way, Naugatuck River Basin Manager, and based on his recommendations, hired the U.S. Army Dive Company. The Dive Team had recently inspected the Stamford Hurricane Barrier and had a lot of experience inspecting Corps dams throughout the country.



Diver from the 511th Army Dive Team prepares to inspect Tully Dam.



Diver begins his inspection of Tully Dam.

When I contacted the team they were eager to help.

On Aug. 22, the seven member crew of the 511th Dive Team arrived at Tully Dam from Fort Eustis, Virginia, to perform the inspection under the safety oversight of Engineer Bill Kavanaugh and the technical direction of Engineer Deborah Gabrielson. Dive team leader Sgt. Andrew Harrison quickly had his crew set up and held a safety meeting to ensure a successful dive.

When all was ready the diver descended, equipped with surface supplied air and a helmet-mounted video camera and spotlight. The diver had live 2-way radio communication with Gabrielson, who watched the video feed on a monitor in the back of a box truck. She was able to direct the diver and ask questions throughout the inspection. The entire inspection including dialogue was recorded digitally and burned onto a DVD.

While down, the diver also inspected the condition of the steel trash racks and the concrete walls for a complete inspection of parts of the intake structure that hadn't been seen in over 40 years. For the safety of the diver, one of the two sluice gates was closed and locked out while the diver was on that side. Work began at 9 a.m. and the entire inspection was completed by 2:30 p.m.

Overall, the condition was better than I expected with no major problems. I was very pleased with the Dive Team's professionalism and performance.

Derry, Londonderry propose to construct new Exit 4A, connecting easterly from I-93

by Timothy Dugan
Public Affairs

A joint public hearing was held Sept. 12 in Derry, New Hampshire, on the proposed construction of the new Exit 4A, connecting easterly from I-93 in Derry and Londonderry.

The towns of Derry and Londonderry, through their agents CLD Consulting Engineers, propose to construct a new easterly access-only interchange on Interstate Highway I-93 with a new connector road and other roadway improvements along Folsom and Tsienneto Roads at their intersections with New Hampshire Route 28, N.H. Route Bypass 28 and N.H. Route 102 in the towns of Derry and Londonderry.

The hearing was sponsored by the Commission with New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services-Wetlands Bureau (NHDES), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Corps of Engineers.

FHWA has prepared a draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and it is available for review at the Derry Community Development Department, 14 Manning St., Derry, N.H.

or at the Londonderry Planning and Economic Development Department, 268B Mammoth Road, Londonderry, N.H. Project materials also can be reviewed online at www.londonderrynh.org, www.derrynh.us, or www.cldconsultingengineers.com.

The proposed new I-93 interchange (Exit 4A) would be situated approximately one mile north of the I-93 Exit #4, that is the I-93/NH Route 102 interchange in Londonderry.

The applicants are seeking approval from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. The work would involve discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States and into state waters and wetlands. The towns have also applied for a New Hampshire, Department of Environmental Services Dredge and Fill permit under RSA 482-A for the proposed work. Mitigation is proposed to compensate for the wetland impacts consisting of the potential preservation of 42 acres of undeveloped lands and 1.7 acres of wetland enhancement.

The new exit would provide direct access to and from north and south-bound I-93 travel lanes to and from the east of I-93 only. The proposed con-

necting road would be built on a new location beginning at the new Exit 4A and extending easterly approximately 4,900 feet (0.93 miles) to the intersection known locally as Ross' Corner (crossing of NH Route 28, Folsom Road and Tsienneto Road).

Associated work would include partial relocation of the intersections of Malden Road and North High Street with Folsom Road as well as improvements along Folsom Road to the Franklin Street Intersection and Ross' Corner to provide additional travel and turning lanes necessitated by the proposed interchange. The intersection of Tsienneto Road and NH Route 28 Bypass would be reconstructed to add through and turning lanes and a new traffic signal. Other associated improvements include minor safety improvements along 3,200 feet of Tsienneto Road from the intersection of Barkland Drive to NH Route 102 (Chester Road), including reconstruction of the NH Route 102/Tsienneto Road intersection to add through and turning lanes and a new traffic signal.

Public comments on the proposal were accepted through Sept. 28. The Corps public notice can be reviewed online at the Corps website <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>.



The one that didn't get away

Ray Barros of Norton, Mass., had a fabulous weekend fishing bluefish midway between Bourne and Sagamore Bridges on Southside. Fishing is only one of many recreational activities at the Cape Cod Canal. (Photo by Kevin Burke)

Inner-city kids discover nature at Buffumville Lake

By Park Ranger Susan Ingalls
Buffumville Lake

From July 19-21, four USACE Park Rangers were greeted by a number of tentative, yet eager young faces. These were the faces of the Fresh Air Fund members ranging anywhere from five to fifteen years old. The Fresh Air Fund is an organization of suburban and rural volunteer families who take in an inner-city child for two weeks. These children, often from areas such as The Bronx, are given the opportunity to experience lifestyles outside of major metropolitan areas.

The Fresh Air Fund (FAF) volunteer host families teamed up with Buffumville Lake Park Rangers this July to give the kids a chance to explore the great outdoors and learn to appreciate nature.

Many FAF kids have never even had the opportunity to see a body of fresh water, let alone swim in one. As a result, Buffumville Rangers were eager to share their knowledge and experience with these deserving youngsters. Ranger Jean Hixson played a key role in the major organization of this

first-time program. Accompanying her were Buffumville's three seasonal rangers; Elisa Carey, Ian Haskins and Susan Ingalls, who designed much of the three-day schedule of events.

Highlights of the event included Engineering/Planning's Mike Penko, who gave a detailed presentation on freshwater turtles native to the area, as well as a few exotic species.

Park Ranger Ian Haskins later took the group of children into the forest at dusk for their last lesson of the day, "Survival in the Woods."

Haskins taught children what to do if lost in the woods. They learned how to build a shelter and a fire, as well as what foods the forest provides and which plants to avoid.

Wachusett Bass Club of New England volunteers brought the boats and tackle, while Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife provided the rods and reels for a fishing derby. The Bass Club members joined rangers in teaching FAF kids how to fish while respecting wildlife and its habitat.

Other activities during the event included an interactive water safety program; making homemade hiking sticks and then decorating with a wood burner and paints; nature hikes; swimming; Nature Arts and Crafts; a camp-out on the edge of the lake; and time at the Buffumville Nature Touch Table.

While exhausted from their efforts, rangers were pleased with the success of the program. "The inner-city kids were so grateful. Watching them catch a fish for the first time made all the work worth it," said Ranger Ingalls. "One 14-year old girl from the Bronx said that she would love to have a job like us rangers in her future."

The Fresh Air Fund will return to Buffumville Lake next summer with new recruits. Buffumville Rangers are ready and eager to teach open minds how to appreciate wildlands and their diverse creatures.



Children make hiking sticks to use on several nature hikes they would take during the three day Fresh Air Fund event.



Photos by Pamela Thompson.

After making hiking sticks, children participating in the Fresh Air Fund Program decorate their sticks using a woodburning method.



Children got to touch turtles during Mike Penko's presentation. Penko's nature talk was one of several during the Fresh Air Fund event.



A child gets to see a wild animal up close at the Fresh Air Fund event. Most participants are from places like the Bronx in New York and have never seen a wild animal.



A young participant of the Fresh Air Fund program catches his first fish ever at Buffumville Lake.



Park Rangers assist Fresh Air Fund Program children decorate their hiking sticks using paint and woodburning.



Fresh Air Fund Program participants get a safety briefing before beginning one of the event's nature hikes.

Dredging up the past . . .



September 11, 2007 marks the sixth anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Above: Rachael Raposa and Lynne Bleakney were two of many employees to rush to Ground Zero in New York as part of the New England District's first responders team.

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